

toward an outer side in the axial direction.

REMARKS

Receipt of the Office Action of March 10, 2003 is gratefully acknowledged.

Claims 4, 6, 7 and 10 were reconsidered and found to be unpatentable under 35 USC 102(e) over Fukano et al, 5,996,636.

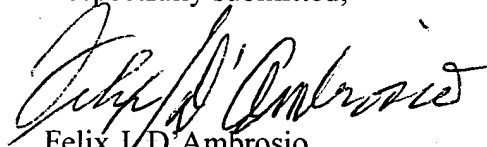
Fukano et al is an example of a prior art joint in which the outer surface of the insert member 26 and the inner surface of the protruding part of the joint body 16 engage opposing surfaces of the tube member 20 (see Fig. 1). In contrast, according to the present invention, the inner surface of the inner ring 2 does not engage the facing surface of the pipe member 2. Note the gap formed between these surfaces in Fig. 2 (see annotated copy of Fig. 2 attached hereto).

To set forth this distinction, claim 10 has been further amended to recite the gap noted above and to further recite that the gap is reduced in extent in assembly but not eliminated as is the case in Fukano et al. According to the present invention this gap is produced because of the abutment of the projections 9 and the inner peripheral face 4a (Fig. 2).

The gap, designated as x_1 , which is a reduced segment of gap x , is not shown or disclosed at all in Fukano et al. Accordingly, claim 10 cannot be considered to be anticipated by Fukano et al 5,996,636 because it does not disclose or suggest this structural limitation found in claim 10.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration is respectfully requested, the amendment to claim 10 entered and claim 10, along with claims 4, 6 and 7 found allowable.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Felix J. D' Ambrosio".

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